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RUNES AND CADENCES

RUNES AND CADENCES

BEING
ANCESTRAL MEMORIES
OF
OLD HEROIC DAYS

BY
R. EMMET KENNEDY

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Dedicated to

MATILDA STOLL

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY THINGS

"On a certain day when King Felim was in Cashel, there came to him the abbot of a church, who took his little eight-stringed harp (ocht-tedach cruit) from his girdle, and played sweet music, and sang a poem to it."

—Speckled Book of Lecan.
(Leabhar Breac) 8th. Century.

"Harmony is a kind of food to the mind. Whatever our pursuit, Music assists application and quickens genius. It gives courage to the brave and assists the devotions of the pious. Hence it is that the bishops, abbots, and holy men in Ireland are used to have the Harp about them, and piously amuse themselves with playing it. Music has its effects on the vicious as well as the virtuous. Music has a power to alter our very nature. Isador hath said: that without Music no institution of discipline is perfect. The very world is said to have been harmoniously created."

—Giraldus Cambrensis. (1188)
(Cambriae Descriptio, Chap. X)

"These venerable ancient song-enditers
Soared many a pitch above our modern writers:
With rough majestic force they moved the heart,
And strength and nature made amends for art."

—Lucan's "*Pharsalia.*"
(Trans. Nicholas Rowe, 1718)

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THE SINGER TELLS OF THE SONGS

"The sigh goes further than the shout.
A whole day's rapture is soon forgotten,
but a sigh in the night lingers long in
the ear and the heart."

—Old Gaelic Proverb.

TELLING OF THE SINGER

"If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs (the sister and the brother),
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other."

—Richard Barnfield. (1595)

Aengus Ōg, the ancient Minstrel, maker of runes and cadences, was not an old man in the way of mortal years passed amid his Fellow-men in the quiet Country where he lived. But if you reckoned his age by the vague reminiscences and half-remembered experiences and immemorial recollections of other lives, when he lived in another condition of Being, and thought and moved in the presence of Supreme Beauty, then indeed, he was an old, old Soul.

His people called him Aengus Ōg after the long unworshiped but eternal Love-god of his Ancestors. Maybe because of their great reverence for things of the Spirit, or because of the rune-maker's craft in singing the glamour and wonder of Love whenever he played upon his harp of moods in the lonely silence of the night; or because of the immeasurable Love he felt for his Fellow-men.

Ages ago, when the World was young, Aengus Ōg the Ever-living One, was the Love-god of the people of Erin.

His appearance was said to be more dazzling than all Beauty; and no mortal eye dared to look but once upon his luminous form. In his left hand he carried a silver harp with strings the color of Sunset gold, and the sound that hurried from the stricken strings was sweeter to hear than the rustle of the Birch leaves whispering in the Moonlight. Over his harp flew four singing Birds with plumage the color of Chicory flowers that bloom in the August morning. These Birds were four of his kisses, transformed by the Great Enchanter, to sing of Love in the hearts of youths and maidens to make them ache with pangs of happy remembrance. "Come, surrender," two of the Birds would call out to young lovers; and, "Go, and remember," the other two Birds would call. And anyone hearing them would never know single peace of mind again.

And in that far-off, dreamful, pastoral time, the rune-maker heard the singing of the Birds of Aengus Ōg, and the burden of their Song became a shadow of Bliss that followed his wandering wherever he went, chanting to him down the Centuries the ancient Rune of Happiness, the heart-song of all Time,—

"Love is holy,"
Went their singing,—
"Love is master
Of the Spirit;
Love is man's divine revealment,"

Sang the Birds
Of Aengus Ōg.

And of the substance of these throbbing memories, the rune-maker fashioned his nocturnes and laments in the peaceful Silence of the long nights:

Making a song of the latest mood,
Singing for naught but the song's own good,
Oblivious of listeners, applause, renown.

Always venturing with a happy freedom into that fair Domain of the Spirit where Melody wanders unintentional as of old, and where there is no set pattern for the making of a song; where the listening Soul apprehends the holy majesty of Infinitude and succumbs to the glorious accident of at-one-ness with Truth and the Absolute.

Sometimes his wandering led him within sight of the blue Hills of Beauty and the Dream Mists that hover over long-buried Inys yr Affalon, the Island of Apples, the Paradise of the Pagan Celts, lying somewhere in the Western Sea near the green shores of Hy Brasil, the Land of Immortal Happiness and Hopes fulfilled; somewhere within range of Tir-na-n-Ōg, Land of the Ever-young, out towards the sunset, where the Souls of departed Spirits wait on the sunlit shore of the Great Sea for the coming of the white Barge which comes to ferry the Elect across the waves to the Isle of the Blest. The

barge has no need of wind nor rudder nor sail to speed it over the waves; the wish of the Fate that guides it being all-sufficient.

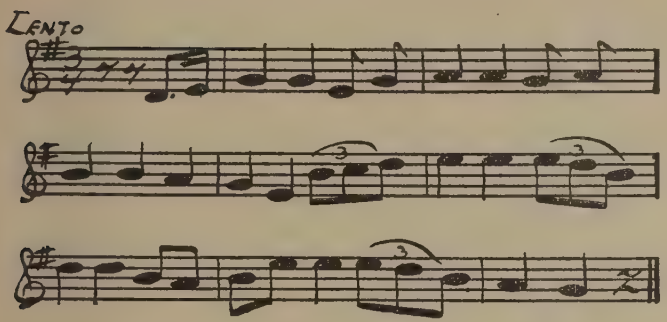
And so it was the old Minstrel fashioned his runes and cadences. And in extolement of his singing, thus he spake:

No masterful singer am I,
  No Bard of the lofty lyre;
My runes are the querulous Echoes that cry
  From the depths of Ancestral Desire.
No classic declaiming is mine,
  Nor weaving of complex themes;
My songs are but scraps of the Glories that shine
  Through the Dusk of inherited Dreams.

NOSTALGIA

"Forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over."

—Poe. (1829)



Who will say that it is not well to waste one's lone inheritance,—the vast and vague extravagance that colors every impulse of the Dreamer's heart? For little does it avail one to dream too much or to dream too long, spending the scanty share of days in pursuit of the Unexpressed and the Unattainable; longing for the Infinite things the world has never seen. Impelled by the same strange ecstasy which set Cuchulain fighting the waves of the sea, or led Coalte Mac Rōnan to storm the Palace of the Gods, or caused Oisin to go seeking in vain for three hundred years to appease the yearning of his

insatiable heart with a knowledge of all the pleasures of Fairyland: the same melancholy ecstasy which moved James Clarence Mangan to lament:

"Sacred flame—which art eternal!
O bright essence!
Thou, Enthusiasm! forsake me not!
O, though life be reft of all her vernal
Beauty, ever let thy magic presence
Shed its glory round my clouded lot."

The same unconscious fostering of the older emotions, —that dormant sense of reverence for primal Beauty, floating out from the dim Past like a wave of wistfulness, waking my attentive harp to such a song as this:

My thoughts go back to Avalon
No matter where I be;
My Dreams are all of Avalon
Long buried in the Sea.

The Apple Groves of Avalon
Hold memories for me
That bind me to the Pagan Past
And will not let me free.

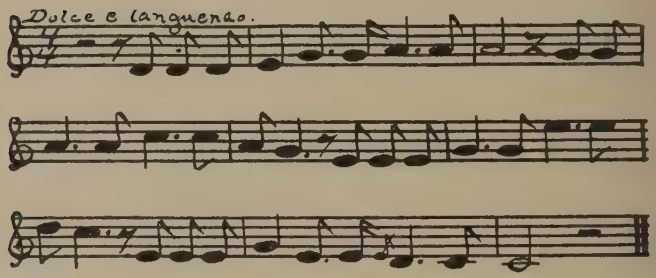
The winds that blow from Avalon
Bring messages to me
Recounting to my peasant Soul
Its lost nobility.

O scented gales of Avalon,
  Blow no more Dreams to me;
My heart is full and fain would rest
  From chasing Ghosts at Sea.

AENGUS GIVES THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF SONG

"And there he saw, with full advisement,
Th' erratic starres heark'ning harmony,
With soundes full of heav'nly melody."

—CHAUCER.
(Troylus & Cresseyde, 1532)



Aengus Ōg, the ancient Minstrel, waking from his tearful dreaming, takes his harp from out the shadows 'round its hanging-place enclustered, and across the strings sonorous with his light, caressing fingers liberates a song of longing, chanting thus, alone in Silence:

Here,
At the first soft call of Night
Expanding her wings
O'er the weary World,

Here
'Neath the thorn tree's sheltering boughs,
Clad in a robe
Of drifting mist,
With the fragile gems
Of the weeping leaves
Lighting my brow
Like a shining crown;
Here,
With a drowsy Dream in my brain
And Voices of Eld
In my sentient ears,
Teeming with memories
Of vanished times
And ripples of Song
For sequential days;
Here
In the heart
Of the peaceful wood
With the harp of my moods
In my Minstrel hands,—
Here
At the peep of the red-gold Moon,
Aengus gives thanks
For the Gift of Song!

Host of the Shee
Roaming over the World

From every green rath
Where the Four Winds blow,
Come in with the Twilight
And ride abroad!

Ride out from the valleys,
Ride in,—
Bend low;
Ride in with the Moon
And anoint my harp;
Bend down in your revels
And kiss the strings,
Bequeathing the Music
Of many sounds.
Call out from the cool
Of the Northern hills
And out of the South
Where the Sea winds wail;
Call out from the thicket
And lonely glen
The melodies
Lingering 'mid weeds and trees;
The plashing of rillets
Through banks of fern;
The rustling of leaves
On dangling vines,
And threnodies
Creeping by mossy cairns

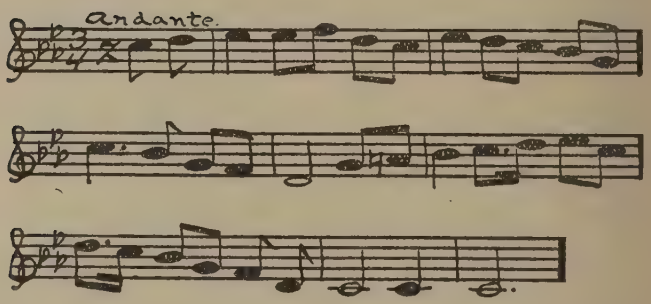
Reverberant of Death
And the lure of Love.
Quicken my harp
With the soothering sound
That follows your Host
As ye blithely ride
Through the Region of Peace
In the haunts of Men,
That my lips may refashion
A Song of Cheer.

Breathe soft
On my harp
And caress the strings,
Imparting the Joyance
Of exquisite Sound,
That my Soul may exult
In the Glory of Song
And echo the Chant
Of the Deathless Voice!

RUNE

"The ghosts of the lately dead were near
And swam on gloomy clouds."

—Oisin.
(3d. Century)



Alone, in the darkness of the haunted room, in the calm presence of the saintly Dead, my gaze fixed on the youthful loveliness of One that flew back to Infinitude with the flame of my Love on unsullied wings; soon I felt my eyes flooding with tears I never shed before. Tears I knew my many Mothers wept long ago in loneliness.

O the wonderment that awakened in my Soul at that mysterious moment! Then it was I learned and understood the majesty of Sorrow and immemorial Grief. Then it was I seemed to learn the inconsequence of mor-

tal Joy,—flimsy and flat as Morning sunshine falling on unheeding grass. Then it was I knew the Wisdom of unknown tears,—tears that wake the Soul and mellow Life and blend into Eternity.

And dreaming of my vanished Love that walked among the Living Dead, my Spirit sang this Love-rune in the dark:

Vournin,
Vournin,—
Ye that have snared me so,
Are ye a Spirit of ancient days,
A Lover I used to know
Who taught me the Wonder of deathless Love
In the Youth-time of long ago?

Vournin,
Vournin,—
Ye that I love so well,
Will ye long keep me a captive thus,
Or will ye remove the spell
That bothers my brain like a tender tale
My dead Mother used to tell?

Vournin,
Vournin,—
Spirit so virginal fair;
Ye with the eyes of the Twilight brown

And the glimmering Moonlight hair,
  The thought of your Love is a shadow of Bliss
That follows me everywhere.

  Tell me,
  O gal machree,—
Tell with those Glances meek
  That quicken my heart with the secret thrills
And redden my guilty cheek,—
  Tell me ye know what my Soul exclaims
When the Voice of me fails to speak!

SLAINTE!
(*Health*)

"Our fill of wine and of meat;
Justice and a right beginning at the feasts,
Sweet drinks and every one drinking them."

—Oisin.

"Of Ronewen that was Engistis doughter / and how the kynge Vortigern espowsed her for her bewte. / And togyder they ete and dranke with moche joy / and when nyght came / that this kynge Vortigern sholde goo into hys chabre / to take there hys nyghtes rest. Ronewen that was Engistis doughter / came with a cuppe of golde in her honde / and knelyd before the kynge / and sayde to hym / Wassaylle. And the kynge knewe not what it was for to meane / no what he sholde answere for as moche as hymself / no none of hys Brytons / cowde noo englysshe speke no understonde it / but spake in the same langage that Brytons doon yet. Nevertheless a latyner tolde the kynge / the full understondyng thereof 'Wassaylle' / and that other sholde drynk 'Haill.' And that was the fyrste tyme that Wassaylle / and Drynkhaill came up in this lond."

—Caxton, Chronicles of England (1482).

"He that would be Merry—drink Wine!
He that would be Strong—drink Ale!
He that would be Healthy—drink Mead!"

—Taliesin. (540 A. D.)

Autumn was the time when it came to pass,—at Dawn, near the hour of the blueing of the Day, as I lay in a flood of tranquil Moonlight falling across my pallet bed: when, "Awake," cried the voice of the amorous Dawn,— "Awake, and unbind from your bosom's core a Song in accord with the Joy you feel."

And I went to the window with harp in hand, and I looked upon the Moon-flood, listening long. When a strange, pulsing Ecstasy shook my frame, and a Music bewildering filled my mind with a drone like the clamor of wandering bees; like the rumble of voices far away where a Feast of Welcome with story and song holds forth in the hall of some great house. And the subtle enchantment ravished Sleep and quickened my thought with an old unrest,—awaking the memory of Joys that were, the ripples of laughter and lilting tunes and Wassail revels of Bards and Kings, and the twanging of harps in the Banquet Hall.

Then a passion of Gladness swept my Soul, and there in the Moon-flood I made this song:

Heigh-ho, Lads,
  Let us sing to the iterating
    Rum-tum tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
And drink to the Lady-birdies,
  Tantalizing, captivating,
    Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

Minty marvels
On the bloom o' the Honeysuckle,
Rum-tum tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
She tucks 'em in the fast'ning
Of her belt for a bonny buckle,
Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

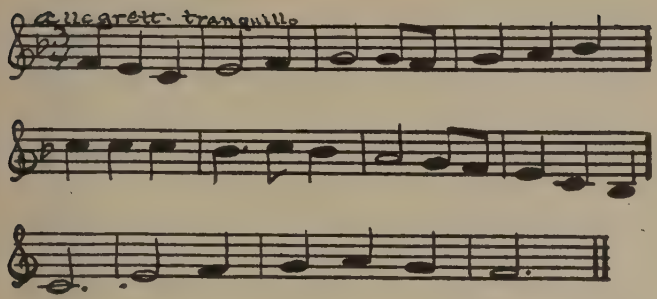
Dilsy dotes
On the pretty pink Perriwinkle,
Rum-tum tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
She pins 'em on her bosom
Gazing down with a merry twinkle,
Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

These twain Maids
Keep us guessing at the riddle o' them,
Rum-tum-tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
Our hearts like the posies
With the pin through the middle o' them,
Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

Drink then, Lads,
For there's something that is rare about 'em,
Rum-tum tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
E'en though they're persecuters,
How would we fare without 'em?
Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

Loud, Lads,—
  Waken up the merry, merry jubilating
    Rum-tum tiddle timmy-I-tum-toe,
A Health to the Lassies
  With their foibles all exhilarating,
    Rum-tum tiddle-um, Sing ho!

ENCHANTMENT



Like a lone, inquiring Soul, going once again to walk upon the shining hill where old Ambition camped, looking to find the foolish ones still wandering in the mist below, unwittingly I gleaned new tidings in the Silence.

I thought I saw my own, simple, Corybantic heart go forth adventuring; rearing an altar for its Chosen-One and bringing burning incense to the shrine; gathering in the glamorous grove the fairest flowers of Fancy and weaving them into garlands to hang about the shrine; making prayerful songs of praise and little hymns of adoration to magnify the Beloved-One enshrined in transient glory.

"What if the thing beatified is heedless of these offerings?" I asked my Soul, bowed low in adoration.

"No matter," it made answer. "Its high, serene, deific form is loaves and fishes to my Fancy's greedy multitude; its body's glowing whiteness glorious to gaze upon; its eyes, like altar candles, bringing peaceful light around me, like the quiet splendor gleaming through the Tabernacle door."

"Even so," I told my Soul; "this is enough. Pleasant it is dwelling amid the evanescent, lingering over the beautiful foolishness of temporal things."

My Love is a Linnet, a timorous Bird,
With power to enslave with a tuneful word
Whether high in the tree-top his song is heard,
  Or hid in my heart inaudibly singing.

My Love is a masterful, cunning Magician
  That dazzles the vision and dizzies the brain.
A vassal am I to the smiling Patrician
  And silently suffer in exquisite pain.

O mighty Voice
That sings within my Soul,
I thrill
To hear thy most indifferent word.

No tone is lost,
No note may go a-stray;
They linger on like benisons
Recorded all in wonderment.

No murmur dies,
But gathers into bars of Music
Glamorous and strange,
To flood my heart
When Thou art still
And inundate my Soul
When I would dream.

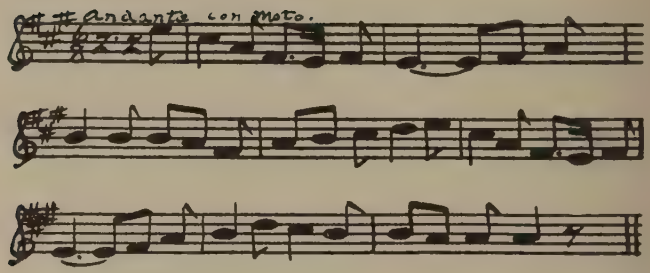
O secret Love of mine,
Thou sounding lyre,—
My thoughts are harp-strings
Trembling to thy will.

Smite hard upon them
With thy Master hand
And make them twang
With memories of Thee,—
Soft echo of a conquering song,
Mellifluent,
Imponderable,
Strange.

THE APRIL ORIOLE

"I had from his beak
The voice of inspiration,
A song of metres
That gratified me;
Glad was I made
By his minstrelsy."

—Rhys Goch ap Rhiccart.
(Circa 1400)



Let me give thanks that I have looked upon the fleeting wonder of an August morning radiant with the gold of scattered Sunshine and the azure mist of Chicory flowers marvelous and multitudinous for the Glory of a single day.

Let me be glad that I have seen a flock of hungry Sparrows crowding the twigs of a Cocklebur bush growing by the side of a dismal ditch, the leaves all withered,

the burs all dried, the ditch all barren and choked with dust; the hungry Sparrows fluttering their wings to frolic and flaunt in squalor's face, thrilled with the Joy of another day.

Let me remember that I have found Beauty in many a strange abiding place, afar from secret sanctuary.

Let me rejoice that my ears have heard the shout of the April Oriole, singing unseen in the Willow branches, shouting his glee to the passing Breeze.

And for humble deeds and paltry songs of nothingness, need I hope to be remembered more than these?

Delightful enchanter,
Linguistic descanter
  Of various runes of the feathery brood,
Itinerant ranger,
I welcome thee, stranger,
  Thy merriment brightens my petulant mood.

From under the Yarrow
The impudent Sparrow
  Has chirruped all day in a dull monotone;
Now gladly I'm listening
Thy jubilant whistling
  Re-echoing here through the garden alone.

Descend from the Willow's
Aerial billows

And come to the Elder that shadows my door,
And shout me thy warning
This beauteous Morning
That I might absorb thine ecstatical lore.

Thy pastoral flutings
And limpid dilutings
Of plagiarized twitterings and liquid-like trills,
I fain would imbibe them
And faithful transcribe them
That Mortals might learn of their Love-making thrills.

Bewildering singer,
Importunate bringer
Of messages peaceful and tidings of good,
Sing out, I beseech thee,
And worthily teach me
The riddle of Happiness misunderstood!

THE SONGS OF SCATHACH, THE SHADOWY-ONE

"The ancient Irish cultivated three species of musical composition, answering to the three musical modes which the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians. These were the Goll-traideacht (goll-tree), the Gauntraideacht (gaun-tree) and the Suan-traideacht (soon-tree). The Goll-tree was adapted to festive entertainments, either to elevate the soul to martial action, or excite therein the more humane dispositions to Love, Mirth and Dance. The Gaun-tree included the dolorous, wherein was lamented the loss of active virtue, in the decease of great men, or the bad fortune of unsuccessful heroes, once the ornament of society. After the invasion of the English the Irish were very much confined to this species of music. The Suan-tree was intended for composing the soul to rest, and suspending the mental labors which might succeed the corporal toils of the day."

—Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards.
Joseph Walker, 1786.

"A tale of the times of old!
The sound of the days
That are no more
Arises in my soul."

—Oisin.

Like a giant moth lost in gathering darkness, the wandering Wraith of Loneliness began to beat its tired wings against my brooding Soul.

With eager speed I hurried forth, invoking rude forgetfulness, seeking the old tranquillity that folds the happy hillocks in the fields of silent Night. And soon I heard strange Voices singing, borne onward by the Three Winds that roam about the Universe; calling through the darkness on the fitful Wind of Dreaming, on the Wind of vagrant Memory, and the lilting Wind of Song.

I heard the noise
Of the hunt on the hill
Where the sons of the chase
Were gathered.
The hounds were loud
On the mountain-side,
And loud was the blast
Of the winding horn.
And many a lilt
And snatch of song
In tuneful sound arose.

And my harp was stirred
By the eerie charm
And wakened a tale
Of the times of old:

Finn and his heroes
Went forth at Dawn

To hunt the wild boar
In the leafy wood;
And the people that dwelled
In the Fairy Hills,
By dint of enchantment
And secret spell,
Put glamour upon them
That Finn might come
And ask for a bride
From among the Shee.

So a maid was brought,
Called the Shadowy-One,
And was taken by Finn
For his fairy wife.
And a feast was spread
For the joy of all,
And the gift of good fortune
Pleased Finn full well.
And when Night came on,
Then the Shadowy-One
Did call for a harp,
And a harp was brought.

One iron string
Had the magic harp,
And one string of bronze,
And one silver string.

And if ever she played
On the iron string,
'Twas weeping and crying
Was all you'd hear.
And if ever she played
On the bright bronze string,
'Twas laughing from darkness
Till dawn you'd hear.
And if ever she played
On the silver string,
'Twas in a deep slumber
The whole World fell.

So the Shadowy-One
With the magic harp
First her fingers let fall
On the iron string.
And Finn and his heroes
Were held in thrall
By the sorrowful Music
That moved their Souls.
And the pitiless hands
Of the Shadowy-One
Played on and on
On the iron string,
Till at length
The sound of a Voice was heard
Singing the gloom

Of a woman's heart,
The mournful lament
Of a woman's Soul,
The sorrow that lingers
When Love is gone:

Light of my life,
  Thou'rt no longer, no longer the same.
Song of my Soul,
  Thy burden bewailing tells but one sorrowful name.
Pulse of my heart,
  Thou'rt a passion of pain,
Pleading and calling,
  And calling in vain.
Light of my Soul,
  Thou'rt no longer, no longer the same.

This is my song,
Musing along
  Daylight and twilight,
And all night long.

O heart, be strong!
  Hide ye the hurt and the wrong;
  Hide ye the smoldering sorrow
That lives in my song.

  Slow and relentless
  The Music sped

Through the gloomy length
Of the wedding-room,
And Finn and his heroes
Were bowed in tears
Under the dole
Of the mournful song.
Then the Shadowy-One,
With a sudden whim,
Her fingers let fall
On the bright bronze string;
And it trembled with whispers
Of lilting mirth
And the echoes of singing,
And dancing feet,
And the revel of friends
At a merry rout:

Ho! the call
Of the merry, merry Brawle,—
Come, let us revel now the Minstrels play.
Youth-time flies
And longings arise,
And the heart weeps sore for the wasted day.

Sing, then sing!
Too soon Mirth takes wing;
And the Dead hear no dancing in the tomb.

Come! be friends,—
Soon our dancing ends;

Onward we pass,—to meet no more.
Night comes on
And the dancers are gone,
And we sleep so long on the Other Shore.

Sing, then sing!
Too soon Mirth takes wing;
And the Dead need no dancing in the tomb.

And then,
As the last note
Trembled and died,
And the sound of their merriment
Rang through the hall,
The whimsical harper
Beholding their Mirth,
Made haste to subdue them
With Fairy arts;
And slowly
Her shimmering fingers crept
Down the shining length
Of the silver string;
And 'twas though they were hearing
The rustle of Sleep,
And the breathing of Peace
That attends the Soul
Of a slumbering Babe
On its Mother's knee
As she murmurs a tender croon:

Blue lids of flax flowers close,
Spider-webs tangle the rose;
  Drowsy sweet Voices sing over the World
    All through the Night till the Morning.
Close, O Weenoch, those eyelids, too;
Sleep is weaving a Dream for you.

By-low, mo boucaileen bwee,
  Yonder the Dream-fairies call ye away
    Down by the Gates of the Morning.
They will sail ye on silver wings
Through yon land where the Sunlight sings.

Dream Winds of Wonderland, blow,—
Slumberland blossoms, breathe low;
  Murmur my Jewel a honey-sweet croon
    Bland as the coming of Morning.
Trip ye softly where dewdrops gleam;
Lull my Babe with a golden Dream.

Sleep now, mavourneen achree,
  Yonder the Dream-fairies call ye away
    Down by the Gates of the Morning.
They will sail ye on silver wings
Through yon land where the Sunlight sings.

  Like phantoms enchained
  In the Valley of Dreams,

Were Finn and his men
When the croon was done.
Even the hounds
Had felt the charm;
And the stag on the hill,
And the speckled fawn;
And the thistles that grew
By the Moonlit stream,
And every green bush
With a branch to wave,
Were ghostly and still
In the passing breeze
Under the spell
Of the Fairy's song.

And all Night long
They were bound in Sleep
By the soothering sound
Of the silver string.
When lo!
At the first pink peep of Day,
As the quivering Sunbeams
Startled the birds,
Finn and his heroes
Cast off their sleep
Outside of the door
Of the Fairy Hill,
Where the glamour was raised

By the Shadowy-One
That she might conquer
The mighty Finn,
When he came in the Morn
To hunt the wild boar
In the leafy woodland
Of Bearnas Mōr.

GLAMOUR

Back from the Lethe of Dreams long dead
The Dream that is dearest returns at will,
To be nurtured with longing and warmed and fed
Like a hungering Babe that will ne'er be still.

In the lonely Night,
Through the dreary Day,
A Phantom to follow the mind alway;
A fever Oblivion can never allay.
A sorrow by Night,
A pain by Day;
A boon of Delight
To be torn away;
A lingering blight
To breed decay.

O visionary Love that mates with mine,—the many things of Spirit to be said with manly tenderness! My brain reels from the force of them now clamoring for utterance;—high thoughts and longings unappeased, dying mute and lingeringly.

Useless thoughts, worthless Dreams,— "Be still," I say to soothe myself; "Tomorrow will come; another Day may bring them Immortality." But Tomorrow

comes with snow and rain and shivering of the Spirit, and a fever of voiceless, cowering Fear drives all before Eternity.

A beckoning Gleam
On the path of Day,
My heart
Leaping forward
With eager Love.
A glamorous wind
From the ridge of the World;
My Soul,
Like a weed
By the side of the road,
Wistful,
Waiting a chance caress.

Potent Stranger,
Transformer of dullness,—
Make no revealment
Lest my Dream fade.

Yours must be eyes into which I may look with quiet gaze, deep-penetrating; eyes whose depths reveal the symbol my expectant heart would know. Your lips, warm lips that shout their meaning to my Soul, through Silence reaching,—fluent in the unspoken language that electrifies the Soul.

So,
Of a secret, silent Love,
A mendicant Lover,
I sing.

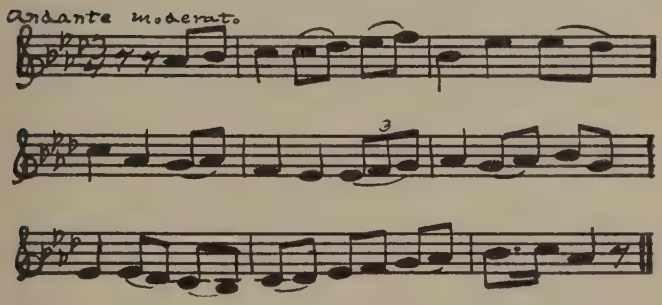
An Idol,
  A shrine with a garland of rue,
A suppliant
  Sighing the long Night through,
  Singing Love's orisons all for you.

How would you know?
  For you do not guess
The passionate flow
  Of this old distress,—
The burden of Love
  That bewilders my brain;
The guerdon of Love
  That is doomed to remain
Hid deep in the well
  Of the heart of me,
Dark to your eyes
  That will never see;
Desolate,
Dumb,—
  Never to be.

So,
Of my secret, silent Love,
A mendicant Lover,
I sing.

CANTICLE

"Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering."
—Emily Brontë. (1846)



And after you have heard me sing the humble little song I made that holy Night commemorating you, will proud Eispnêlos know me as of old? Will you recall that long-gone time, the stillness of my wandering-place, the rapture of the moment and the splendor full-controlling me?

There beside the fairy pool
With waxen white lilies,
In the same olden woodland
Frequented by Dreamers.

The pale lilies quivered
Resplendent in Moonlight,
Disturbing my musing
On long-nurtured loneliness.

I stooped over,
Touching
With light eager fingers,
Parting the lilies
Marooned on the water,
Finding there hidden
A dark shining mirror.

Tremulous lily leaves,
Glamour of Moonlight,—
Somnolent,
Pervious,
Still purple water:
Two eyes not mine
Peering up from the secret depth,
Luring my Soul
With sweet necromancy!

And then it was, proud Eispnêlos, I made this song of you:

My Soul was remembering its mad aftermath
(Belief become doubt)
When you chanced on my path.

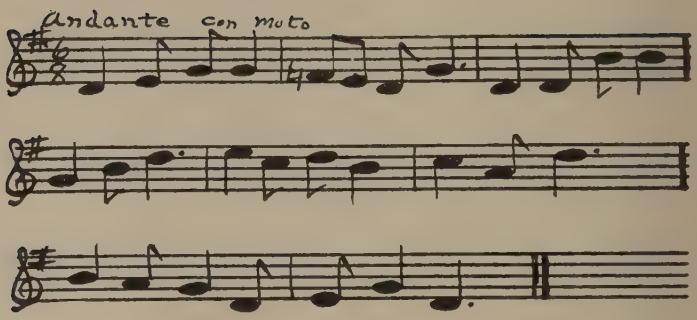
A pilgrim I was in a perilous place,—
  My Soul was illumined
Beholding your face.

I lived as an infidel,—lo! then you came
  Compelling my reverence
In chastity's name.

The harp of my musing was songless and still,—
  It heard your white laugh,
Now its strings are a-thrill

To tell their sweet raptures resurgent and true,
  Proclaiming my Soul's
Adoration for you.

NOCTURNE



I sat where a singer came into a throng
And cast o'er the listeners a doom of Delight,
And my heart kept a-pulse to the flight of the song,
Forgetting all else on that memorable Night.

The rapturous moments enticed me away
From all thought of self and the listeners around,
And to one who was absent my Soul seemed to stray
Afar with the Music's low, languorous sound.

O moment of ecstasy,—fleeting alas!
Meseemed to have heard in the stillness her song
As she waited my coming at every pass,—
"O hasten, Beloved, why tarry so long?"

"O bide not a moment but follow me here
Where the grasses awake to the Zephyrs of E'en,
Where lisping the rillet purls under the brere
And spiders hang gems in the Moonlight serene."

"O hasten, Beloved, the musk of the fern
Has dripped where the ladybug creeps in the damp;
The dew-dribbled gentian droops over the hern
As he blinks in the light of the firefly's lamp."

"I passed where the willow hangs over the brook
That speeds through the grasses and under the ling;
I looked when the tassels in ecstasy shook,
But you came not, delinquent, e'en though I did sing."

"I passed where the mullen spread out in the shade
Its long leaves of velvet all silver and green
And fringed with the netting the spiders had made
To catch the gold powder that fell from the bean."

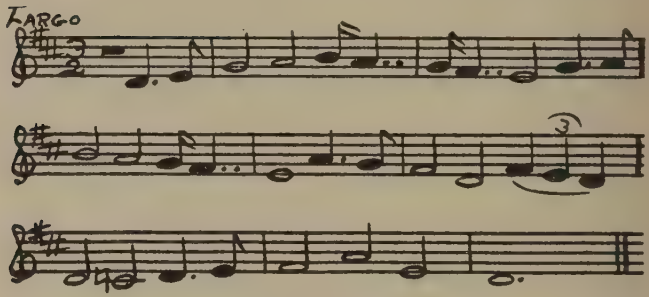
"O hasten, Beloved, the Moon stealing by
Has peeped through the branches, the path is a-light;
The Breezes that pass bring a lingering sigh
That is borne from afar in the stillness of Night."

. . . . . .

I sat where the singer had stood 'mid the throng,
And I listened again for the doom of Delight;
But the singer had passed as the voice of the song,
And I listened alone in the stillness of Night.

QUEST

"In a slumber visional,
Wonders apparitional
Sudden shone on me."
—Anair Mac Conglinne. (XII Century)



A lonely field,
A girl
Slowly walking.

What does she seek
In the purple distance?

Black earth
For the fire
On the lap of the hearth-stone?

A handful of daisies
To stand on the table?

Speak low,—
Her mind is not troubled with blossoms.
Black earth
A long grave
Has made for young Donal.

ENGLYN

"So simple is the earth we tread,
So quick with love and life her frame,
Ten thousand years have dawned and fled,
And still her magic is the same."

—Stopford Brooke. (1888)

Again last Night, Eispnêlos, after you had gone upon your way, I stood alone in the open field deluged with the radiance of a million Summer stars and my old Springtime memory of you.

I saw the Moon come creeping out like a naked Nymph, and I watched her bathe in the glimmering flood that swept the starlit sky.

I felt my cheek caressed by the same unsleeping Wind that kissed the Earth when Time was young, droning a note of that strange chord that woke the Music of the Spheres and stirred among the first-born leaves, sending its echoes around the moving globe.

And then a vision fell upon my Soul, and I beheld,—

The ridge of Midnight
Over the World;
A mockingbird
Exultant
In a towering Camphor tree;

The window open,
Welcoming
The vagrant waves
Of jasmine breath
And murmurous song
Immantling
The naked wraiths
Of pallid Moonshine
Dallying down the floor:

You and I,
Unrespited,
Heart answering heart,
Reverbering
Like muffled tympans
Sounding from afar;
Your lips on mine,
All-solacing;
Your eyes
To light the path unknown,
Inspiring strength,
Dispelling fear:

We two,
Unremembering
The Chimera of Time and Place,—
Touching Infinitude,
Transcending Doom.

And having wandered in my vision till I stood within the presence of the universal Ghost of Beauty symbolizing God, I made this englyn, calling out my joy:

I am an atom of the Void
In ecstasy suspiring.

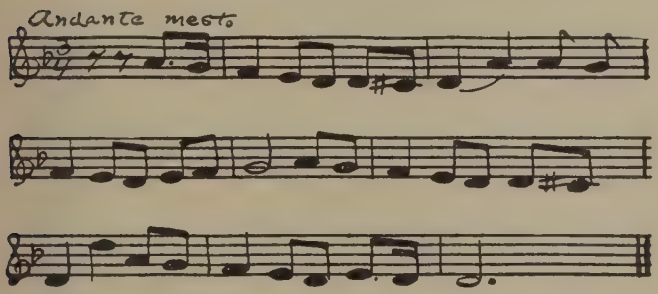
I am an echo of the Voice
To every call responding.

I am a unit of the Flesh,
Primordial vice inheriting.

EIDOLON

"If the soul of a Woman in its usual form represents a secret closed with seven seals, it is, when prisoned in the sturdy body of a man and fused with some of the motives of manhood, a far more enigmatic scripture of whose sibylline meaning one can never be really sure."

—De Joux. (1893)



Impenetrable, mighty Urge that fashioned my poor Soul, my consciousness awakes tonight as Widow, Wife and Maid.—I feel the old experiences that wring my feminine Soul with ghostly hurt. I see them rise and fade, each one in turn, accusing Ghosts of unacknowledged, unappeased Desire,—the punishment and privilege of the lone Uranian Soul.

Out of the tranquil, silver dusk, a tremulous whisper falls:

Something bestirs me,—
A Moonbeam across my path:
Is it a Mem'ry?

Exquisite fancy
That fed my heart's hungriness:
Love's incarnation?

Something advances!
Do thoughts travel audibly?
(Lo! my Love's footsteps.)

Cool honey oozing
From snapdragons' velvet lips,—
Thy voice, Beloved.

Now, my Soul, listen
God's nameless antiphonies,—
My Loved-One speaking.

Did the grass sigh then,
Or Winds in the willow trees?
(O Ghosts of Mem'ry.)

From the far-away, a hushing-song. A Mother croons to her first-born child:

Leannavan mo,
Leannavan mo,

Sure ye are the Elf that can torture me so
With the beautiful, burning, bewildering glow
That falls from the eyes of you,
Leannavan mo.

Torture me on,
Boucaileen ban,—
Ye Sprite with the Soul that's as white as the Dawn.
Blithely I'll follow you, light as the fawn
That follows the Sunlight,
Mo boucaileen ban.

Tarry with me,
Mo leannav' mo chree;
'Tis ye that have magical power o'er me
To make me a child again blithesome and free
When I see the soft smiles of you,
Leannav' mo chree.

Grant me a boon,
Mo leannav' aroon:
Lose not your hold on the heart of me soon;
And long let me list the un-namable tune
That rings in the voice of you,
Leannav' aroon.

Out of the darkness, a Love-lament. A Maiden sings to the listening Night:

He went but he said he'd return to me
In Spring when the harebell hides the bee;
  When Winds are awake in the soft green grass
And sing in the branches of every tree,—
'Twas then he would come back to me.

Long was my watch 'neath the Sunset tree
With the harebell blue and the crooning bee;
  And the friendly voice of the soft green grass
Questioned each wandering echo for me,
As eager I'd murmur, "'Tis he!"

The West Wind sang in the willow tree,
And the harebell swayed with the hidden bee.
  "Who comes?" asked the whispering soft green
      grass,
And happy I answered, "'Tis he, ah! me";
Then smiling, I murmured, "'Tis he."

The South Wind sighed in the sycamore tree,
And the harebell tolled with the droning bee.
  "Who comes so late?" said the soft green grass;
"Be happy," I answered, "'Tis he, 'tis he;
Be glad, for he's coming to me."

The East Wind cried in the blackthorn tree;
From the harebell darted the frighted bee.
  "Alas! Who calls?" said the soft green grass;

Then I heard a voice that was weird to me,
And hopeless I sighed, " 'Tis not he."

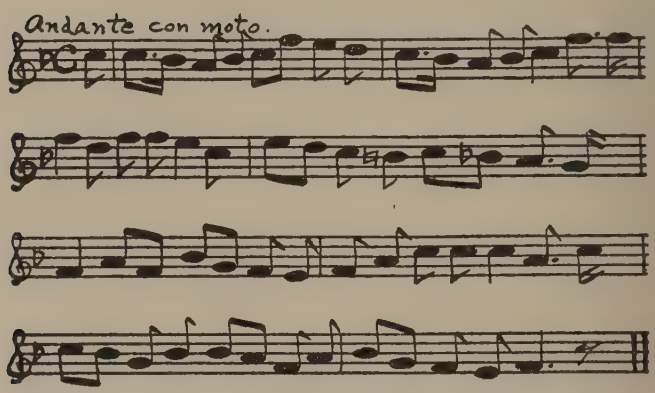
The North Wind wailed in the cypress tree,
And the harebell listened silently.
"Alas! How cold," sobbed the soft green grass.
Then trembling I saw that it was not he,
But Death who was coming to me!

Thus the Springtime returned with the tuneful bee,
And he too, returned, a dead Warrior, ah! me.
And they gouged him a grave in the soft green grass
While the Winds were weeping in every tree.
And I left him slumbering peacefully.

PAVANE & GALLIARD

"O wondrous Faces that upstart
In this Strange Country!
O Souls, O Shades, that become a part
Of my Soul and me!"

—Robert Buchanan. (1878)



'Twas the midnight of my dreaming and the waning hours were fleet
As I glided down the mystic hall where Joys departed meet,
And I heard the drowsy dancing of a thousand ghostly feet.

I heard a croon as sings the sea when wave on wavelet slips,
Then a droning like the piping Pan lets through his finger tips,—

A runic incantation falling silver from his lips.

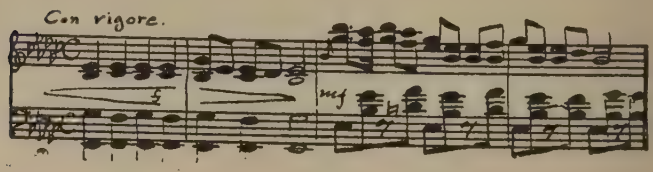
Full a thousand Joys I once had known all spectral I descried
As the Moonlight flowed around them through the casement open wide.
Dame Gladness led the glittering throng with Sorrow by her side.

Fain I gazed upon her blithesome form and watched her naked feet.
Lightly tripping down the Moonlit floor while soft the Music beat,
And Youth bethrilled my heart again,—and O the thrill was sweet!

Then she beckoned me to join the dance and sing the midnight through,
And rejuvenate the thousand Joys my springtime Spirit knew,
There waiting voiceless in the hall, all deathless Joys and true.

Half-bewildered then I felt her take my hand into her own;

Then the dancing ceased and mournful grew the Music's undertone;
Then Sorrow looked at me and sighed, "Wouldst leave me all alone?"



O La Bella Dolorosa, what a gloominess you bring!
So a mesh of tears all gleeless now around me you would fling?
With a tinkling Tarantella I will rout you then, and sing!

On the willow hangs the tassel and the wilding briar vine
Fashions gay festoons of trailing green on every bush to twine;
And a mystic lingering Gladness fills this rustic heart of mine.

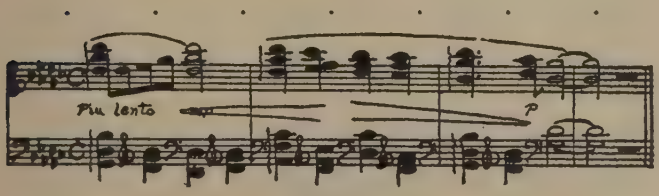
How the ground is decked fantastic with catalpa blossoms strewn!
Every quivering leaf is listening and all Nature is attune;
And in yonder pool the noonday Sun out-stares the placid Moon.

O the wild Bolero Music my old heart keeps beating to,—
Like the hoyden Winds of Autumn when the leaves they
fast pursue;
Like the tinkling tones of Notus when he runs the gamut
through.

Look, the Sparrow on the peach bough and the giddy pil-
grim Bee
Set the Morning all a-tingle with their merry Minstrelsy,
Singing, "Joy dwells in Life's Kingdom and there's Joy
for you and me."

O the Day is filled with Music and it whispers of repose,
And from out yon gloomy wilderness a Wind of Promise
blows,—
Then throw down your prickly thistles; gather violets
and rose.

Whist! You flee, Dame Dolorosa! You out-rant me
with your sighs?
Never while my heart is lusty and there's Beauty 'neath
the skies.
Come, we'll revel in this Splendor ere the blessed daylight
dies.

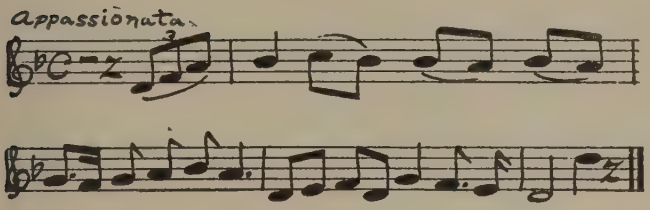


'Twas the Morning of my waking, and the sunshine hours
were gay
As I gathered up the scattered threads that spun my
Dream of gray;
And up I rose to face my task and weave the threads all
day.

THRENODY

"When life, love, glory, beauty wither,
Will wisdom's page or science chart
Map out for thee the region whither
Their shades depart?"

—James Clarence Mangan. (1845)



I saw the Summer Moon, like a wondrous urn of silvery flame, rise up beyond a clump of willow trees and send its light across the midnight sky.

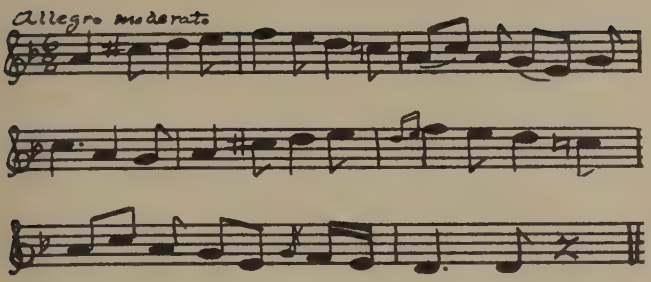
A laughing Wind stole through the dripping trees, trying to dance with sprinkled wings trailing along the grass.

I saw the sleepless Ghosts of unfulfilled Desire gliding before me where I stood in the glimmering Moonlight on my path, and in eagerness of thought, I cried aloud:

Omniscient Moon,
Bringer of somnolent Peace,

Dispenser of Dreams
That live in Poets' lays,—
Sweep over me thy suave Druidic spell
And rid my mind of Gloom.
Steal softly,
Silent midnight Moon,
By the quiet grave
Where my first Love sleeps;
Pause there a moment,
Then send thy light
Across the lonely grassy mound
Where she that was my Mother
Sleeps the sleep of unremembered years.
Then return,
O pilgrim Moon,
And drench my thought
With all thy ghostly flood,
That I may revive and remain awake
To the Spiritual aid
Of the blessed Dead,—
The monitory influence
From out the Vast Beyond.

RICORDANZA



White breast that haunts my waking sight,
(Rare glimpse of Beauty, Angel white)
Those azure veins'
Ensanguined skeins
Have bound my Soul with strange Delight.

One timorous glance
From your eyes' deep wells,
And I drink in the Truth
Of a thousand spells.

The sound of your voice,
And my heart is resigned
To whatever mood
May enchain the mind.

You rout the old inviolate rest
My chastened Spirit long possessed;
And prudence goes
Like vernal snows
That fade from Cruachan's fairy crest.

BLANDISHMENT

"If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall."
—SHAKESPEARE. (Twelfth Night) (1623)

There's a Woman fair that wanders
Through my long day-Dreams,
And her Spirit guides my wandering
Like a star's white beams.

And her voice sings on unceasing
Like a leaf-hid bird,
And my heart makes holy Music
Of her name's one word.

She's the Woman pure that listened
All that fond hearts told
Through the dim-remembered Ages,
For she's old, old, old.

But her heart is fain of Lovers
And their vows of Youth,
For they tend to keep from dying low
Her torch of Truth.

And she holds the sheen of Sunlight
In her dove-gray eyes,
And she croons the Old Enchantments
'Tween her half-breathed sighs.

There she dreams beyond the ocean
Where the wild waves beat
All their mellow mournful Music
'Round her bare white feet;

And she listens to the murmurs
Of the wave-tossed shells,
And she learns the mystic message
That the loud sea tells.

And she hears the Music wander
O'er the cool green glades,
And meander over hill-tops
In the dark thorn shades;

And she hears it flow and falter,
Then it sighs, then sings
As it strikes the harp of Aengus
With its golden strings,—

With the strings of deathless passion
Of the Days of Yore,
Full of dithyrambic magic
And of Druid lore;

Full of haunting, bardic Beauty
Of a race once strong,—
Full of high, ennobling glory
And the Soul of Song.

Then she catches up the burden
Of the Joy-mad rune,
And a-down the Heavens hasten
'Neath the calm, clear Moon

All the Song Winds of the Ages
With their tell-tale notes,
Shouting loud across the ocean
With their deep-toned throats.

And beyond the blue horizon
Clear I hear them cry,
And I hearken to them, yearning,
And my heart beats high

As they speed the weary distance
Of the World half 'round,
With a message on their pinions
Full of sweet, sad sound.

And anon they reach me waiting
On a strange, free shore,
Then they sing their tempting tidings
While my heart droops sore.

Then they kiss my tearful eyelids,
And they breathe low, "Come,"—
But they speed away unanswered,
For my lips are dumb.

Then my heart grows still with wonder
When the Winds have gone,
For another Voice awakes me
With a tone so wan,

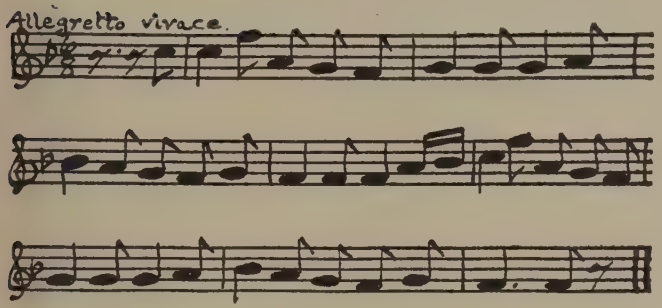
That I tear the web of Dreaming
From my spell-touched brain,
And wait to hear the other Voice
Awake once again.

And its message is, "Remember";
And my lips say, "Yes";
Then the Song-Wind murmurs melt away
Like old Distress.

THE DOOM SONG OF MAEL THE HARPER

"Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Heark, ear, and eye, and everything,
Awake! the while the active finger
Runs divisions with the singer."

—Robert Herrick. (1648)



The King had returned from a wild-boar chase
With his hunters and hounds and his chanting Bard,
And he rode in the Dūn with a blithesome face
And called for an Ale-feast there on the sward,
To honor the Day and the thrilling long ride
With the Lady he loved on her horse by his side.

"Come, pass 'round the ale-horns and flagons of Mead,
And let ye make merry with feasting and drink;

And Mael, good harper, recount ye the deed
  In a long chain of Music joined link unto link,
Enchaining thy voice to the notes as they ring,"
To his men gathered 'round him, so called out the King.

Bright flagons were brought from the Castle within,
  And deer skins were brought and spread out on the
    sward,
And the women came out amid laughter and din
  To drink to the hunters and list to the Bard
As he told of the deeds on the memorable chase
And praised the good King and his Lady's fair face.

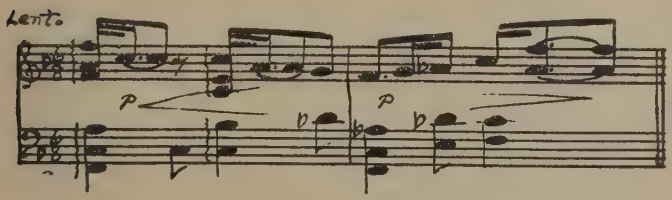
The young Queen was lithe as a reed in the stream,
  And creamy and pink as the heart of a shell;
And her eyes were like eyes that you see in a Dream,
  Disturbing your Soul with the power of their spell
And exciting your Love and destroying your Peace,
Like the amourous eyes of the nymphs of old Greece.

(It was whispered about when the comely young King
  Came back to his halls with his radiant bride
That a Fairy she was who had danced in a ring
  With the Fairies that peopled the green mountain-side;
And the King had made promise to follow her band
If she ruled for ten years as the Queen of his land.)

And this was the day of their revelling set
  'Neath a canopy hung in the Sunlight serene;

And when flagons and tankards and ale-horns were wet,
The King drank a health to his beauteous Queen,
Then called to old Mael, his harper, to raise
A song most befitting his fortunate days.

"To the Vision that charms thee," said Mael the Bard,
And he fingered a lilt on the harp as he spoke;
Then a half-murmured whisper stole over the sward
And a pitying sigh on the Queen's lips awoke,
For she saw that the harper was cruelly blind
And knew but the twilight that followed his mind.



Then again o'er the harpstrings his fingers he drew
And lifted his voice as the Melody ran:
"To the Vision that falls on thine eyes like a dew,
Enslaving a King with the weakness of man,—
Give praise, for such weakness to Love doth belong;
And for Lovers like these, let me weave a new song."

But the King made a sign for the singing to cease,
And he called to the harper, "Good Mael, no more;
Change the theme of thy song and let Pleasure increase;

Come, select ye a lilt from thy ditties galore
And charm us the while we're at revel and drink
Ere the glimmering daylight slips over the brink."

"Even so," said the Queen, "Let thy minstrelsy change
And recount to us sweetly some legend of old;
Some fanciful story, bewildering and strange,—
I prithee begin, let thy memory unfold.
Can'st tell the most wonderful thing thou hast seen?"
Unto Mael the harper so spake the fair Queen.

A sorrowful smile quickly sped o'er his face,
And he bowed towards the Queen and undaunted replied:
"The Vision most wondrous my memory can trace
Is the dancing of Fays on the green mountain-side
To the Music these hands from my harp did unwind
That bewildering night that mine eyes were struck blind

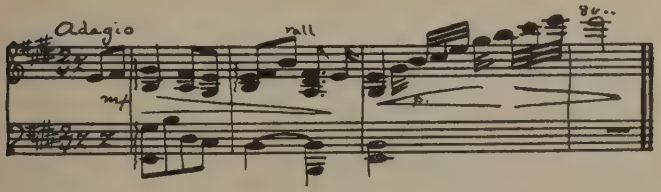
"By a Woman as bright as the glint of the rain,—
A Fairy that led all the revelling throng,
And led me, a fool, into darkness and pain
With the promise of Joy and the Gift of a Song!"
And the Queen bowed her head at these words of the tale,
And her breathing came quick and her bosom grew pale.

Then beholding her plight, the King called out in wrath:

"Take thy harp and depart if of Woe thou would'st
tell!
No shadow must cross o'er her Ladyship's path;—
Come, sing ye of Mirth, and this dark mood dispel."
But the Queen quick arose and she cried, "Nay, not so;
Tell thy Vision, good Bard, tell thy story of Woe."

And she gazed on the King with those mystical eyes,
And he cowered and drooped like a Sun-stricken flower.
Then entreating, she called, "Gentle harper, arise,
And loosen thy fingers' melodious power
And chant us thy story, whatever it be,
And the reason thy pale eyes no longer do see."

Then arising, the harper bowed low to the Queen,
Then lifted his ale-horn and tasted a sip;
And likewise each man that reclined on the green
His flagon or tankard inclined to his lip.
And the women were eager, and silent each man,
As the Music awoke and the harper began:



"I was born with a song in my Soul, they said,
And my Fancy would follow where ever it led;

But the mood that would bring me the true Delight
Was the mood that would wake on a Moon-lit night
And lead me abroad to the hill-side cool
Where the whispering reeds, bending over the pool,
Would steal from the Winds every song they'd bring,
And so I would learn all the snatches they'd sing.

"And it happened one night when the Moon was full
And thorn blooms were gleaming like carded wool,
I came with my harp down a lonely path,
That brought me at length to a Fairy Rath
Where a marvellous murmuring croon I heard
That sang in my heart like a Heavenly bird.
I caught up my harp when the crooning ceased,
And a thrill of Delight from the strings released;
And as the last lingering echo died,
A wonderful Vision I there espied,
For the Fairies had come to the magic ring
To bask in the Moonlight and dance and sing.

"I stood 'neath a tree in the shadow apart
With a passion ecstatic invading my heart,
As the glorious creatures began to careen
Like Wind-shaken blooms on the flowering bean.
And I saw them go tripping and whirling and fall
Like clusters of down from the thistles tall.
Bewildering they sped on invisible feet
To a Music unseen and most wondrous sweet,

Chanting the while an appealing croon
To a plaintive, entrancing, mysterious tune
That seemed to flow down from the shining Moon.
At length, the bewildering dancing ceased,
But the Rapture that thrilled in my heart increased.
I caught up my harp, and I sounded each string,
And I cried,—'Let my passionate fingers sing
The wordless emotion that fills my breast,'—
And scarce had my fingers my Joy expressed,
When a gentle, melodious whisper I heard
Like the rustling of grass by the Breezes stirred;
And turning my eyes in unbounded amaze,
I met the seductive and amourous gaze
Of a creature as fair as a Druid's cloak,
And touching my shoulder, she softly spoke:

" 'Poor Mortal, why waste in a World of care
With nothing of Bliss or of Beauty there?
Come, follow our band with thy harp of Song
And learn of the Dreams of our Fairy Throng.
Come, strike up a lilt in melodious chords,
And over the shimmering grassy swords
We'll revel and reel with silent tread
Till the Moon is gone down and the Midnight sped!'

"I lifted my harp and the strings I pressed
And I played like a creature with Soul possessed;
Like a haunted, delirious, Joy-mad thing,—
Till the Fairies that danced in the magic ring

Grew hazy and dim in the Moon-lit air,
Like the shadowy branches that trembled there.
I played and it seemed that I could not stop;
And I prayed for the vanishing Moon to drop
That my tingling fingers would find release
And the dizzy, delirious dancing cease.
The moments I played seemed painfully long
While under the spell of the Fairy Throng;
And at length, when I felt I could play no more,
I cried out entreating, 'This dancing give o'er
And let quiet return to thy gleeful band
And a respite descend on my harp and hand!'
Then sudden the rollicking dancing stopped,
And my quivering hands from the harpstrings dropped,
And sinking fatigued by the sheltering tree,
Again the fair Creature spoke softly to me:
'O Mortal who playeth such Music divine,
Come, follow and be thou a harper of mine!
I'll give thee each Joy for which Mortals long,
And teach thee the Doom of a mystic Song
As dreadful and potent as Death and fire,—
A Song that will grant to thee every Desire
And bring thee thy simplest wish entire.
Come! Play once again ere the Moon grows old,
And dance but one step ere the Song is told.'

"No sooner the last word I heard her say
Than I snatched up my harp and began to play

A Rhapsody wild as the thoughts that sped
Through the Joy-haunted mists of my Minstrel head.
And then, as the Fairies began to dance,
From out of the circle I saw advance
That glorious Creature with glowing cheek,
And toward me she came and began to speak:
'O say thou wilt be of our merry band
And harp at our revels in Fairyland;
For now thou hast learned of our secret glee
Thy life as before can no longer be.
Come! Join in the dance, for the time grows less;
Forget ye the World and its dark distress.
Come! Follow me there to the magic ring
And the Music of Doom for thy sake I'll sing.'

"Then catching my hand in her own, she led
The way to the ring where the merriment sped;
Then waving her wand o'er the listening Throng,
I heard her awaken a cry of Song
That throbbed in my bosom and stilled my breath
Like the dolorous sound of the Voice of Death.
It told of the terrors of Mortal Woe,
And the secrets of Sorrow poor sinners know;
And the mingling of Grief and of Love and Pain
Flowed all through the song in a sad refrain.
I listened, entranced, and my tears fell fast,
Till the sorrowful burden was over at last;
Then I looked and beheld in the Moonlight clear

The radiant singer advancing near.
Smiling, she called to me where I stood:
'Now bid farewell to thy brotherhood,
For back to the World thou must ne'er return
Now the Doom-song of Fairyland thou did'st learn,
And our dance of Delight thou hast looked upon.
Come! Let us away, for the Moon grows wan;
Come! Follow to Joy,—tell thy Woes begone.'

"And e'en as she spoke they began to start,
And a longing to follow them 'rose in my heart,
But I thought of the tears in the weeping eyes
Of the ones that I loved, and the mournful cries
Of the One that had given her Love to me,
And I called out,— 'Not so. It can never be.
Thy fairest Reward cannot tempt me to come;—
One heart claims my Love, and my pathway points
Home!'

"She turned, and her glance, like a burning blade,
Sank deep in my Soul, and her body swayed,
And she glided along the dim shadowy path
And towered before me, and cried out in wrath:
'If Love claims thy heart and commands thee return,
Go sing to the woman the Song thou did'st learn!
Go! Tell her the darkness it brings to the mind;—
Ye best can describe it, thyself being blind!'
At this, I beheld her two white arms arise,

And her fingers like Lightning fell over my eyes;
Then I saw nothing more, nor knew if she went,
For mine eyes she had blinded,—my vision was spent."

As Mael, the harper, concluded the tale,
He muffled his harp and he bowed his head;
And the listeners were mute, and the Queen was pale
As the cannas that bloomed in the garden bed.
And no word was spoke till the King called out:
"Good harper, thy tale has dropped Sorrow about;

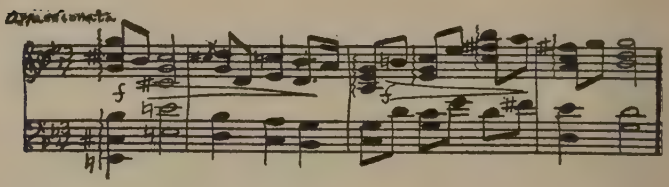
"Pray, put it to flight with a livelier spell
And bring to these people a feeling of ease;
Come, lift up thy voice to a light villanelle,
And gladden our hearts with the Music of Peace.
Leave Fairies to perish,—what say ye, good Queen?
Art pleased with the wonders our harper hath seen?"

But the Queen turned aside, and no word returned,
And her tapering fingers were clenched fast,
And her eyes, like smoldering embers burned,
As over the listeners her glances passed
And fell on the blind harper's drooping head,
Where she gazed for a moment, then slowly said:

"Good harper, thy tale is but half-way told,
And fain would we listen to what remains.
Wilt tell of the woman whose Love thou did'st hold

And for whom thou did'st suffer thy cruel pains?
Full gladly this sequel I'd hear thee recite,—
The Sorrow she knew on beholding thy plight."

Then Mael, the harper, 'rose up in his place
All ready to answer the fair Queen's demand,
And a smile of defiance passed over his face
As he reached for his harp with eager hand.
From the strings came a crashing of wailing notes
That lifted a sob from the listeners' throats.



And they listened in awe as the echoes passed
And left them with feelings of silent dread;
And while they were wondering, the harper at last
His Music began, and to the Queen said:
"The woman I loved in those distant years,
To my life gave her Love; to my blindness her tears;

"And my story I told and she wept full sore,
And the radiant creature with Hate she cursed;
And she prayed that her reason forever more
With anguish be filled, and her Tribe dispersed.

And she swore that her Spirit must vanish in gloom
When she listened again to her dark Song of Doom."

Then wildly his fingers flew over the strings
And awoke from the harp a low dirge of Regret;
And he chanted the words as a penitent sings
Of the festering Sorrows he cannot forget.
And the listeners were dumb, and the King grew pale,
And the Queen swayed and shook like a reed in a gale.

But the harper played on, never seeming to tire,
And the people were powerless under his spell.
He played like a Demon with fingers of fire
Mad Music that tortured like moanings of Hell.
And the King dropped his head in astoundment and fear,
And the Queen shook and stared like a hunted wild deer.

But the harper went on with the doom-bringing Song
That told of the vengeance that slept in his Soul;
When sudden there 'rose from the agonized throng
A cry that rang out like a funeral toll,—
"Hush the sound of thy harp! See, the good King is dead!"
And they looked for the Queen, but the fair Queen had fled.

Then the harper, exhausted, his hands let fall,
And his head slowly sank on his heaving breast;

And they carried the King to the Castle hall,
And the hearts of the hunters were sore oppressed.
And the red Sun went down, and the dreaming Bard
Was left in the Darkness, alone on the sward.

RUNE OF THE CHILDLESS MAN

"And in the Beginning, the High, Invisible One created only the male and female Soul, planting it within a circle, bound by his power side by side, drifting through the Centuries until his plan should be completed."

—Druid Ogham. (V Century)

The honor of an ancient name
Inherited through Centuries!

Lineal scion
Of a noble race,
Male progenitor,
Last remaining link
Of a long-unbroken, shining chain,—

Such am I;
Childless,
Unproductive,
The very futile end
Of perpetuity;
Alone,
With naught to boast
Save Visions of longevity.

The glory of an ancient name
To go down through the Ages!

Moon-touched singer
Of a Minstrel tribe,
Introspective weaver
Of skeins of fugitive Song,
Reverberating instrument
Of reminiscent cadences
Floating off in ecstasy
From out the old heroic days,—

Such am I,—
All Dream-impregnate;
Begetter of unfilial waifs,
Father of phantasmal foundlings;
Bequeathing the worth
Of an ancient name
To these,
The ineffectual,
Unprocreative,
The visionary offsprings
Of my very Inmost Self.

The pity of an ancient name
To pass out unremembered.

NOTES

(1) Aengus Gives Thanks for the Gift of Song, Page 9: "Host of the Shee"; The People of the Shee were the deities of the Pagan Irish; the people of the underground raths and lisses, degenerating later into the Fairy Folk of superstitious belief. In the Irish Mythological Cycle of H. D'Arbois de Jubainville, we read: "The Shee of Ireland is the name by which the Tuatha Dē Danānn (race of the goddess Dana) are known in Irish literature after their defeat at Tailtiu, when they became the contemporaries of the sons of Mile, that is to say, of men. The Shee are in general gods, and the expression includes at once both the gods of Day, Life, and Science, or the Tuatha Dē Danānn, who came from heaven, and the gods of Night and Darkness, or the Fomorians, whose original country was the mysterious land of the Dead. When Saint Patrick came over to convert the Irish they worshipped the Shee. . . . Finally, however, the race of Mile, the Goidels, or modern Irish, arrived, and dispossessed them of the sovereignty. The vanquished Tuatha Dē Danānn took refuge in the caves and depths of the mountains; and when they wander abroad now for diversion's sake, they are protected by a charm, which renders them invisible to the descendants of the blessed mortals who overthrew them."

(2) Rune,
Page 13: "Vournin," pronounced vournyeen; Irish for darling.
Page 14: "Gal machree" (gaoil mo croide), love of my heart.

(3) The Songs of Scathach The Shadowy-One,
Page 25: Scathach, pronounced Schkaw-huh, the shadowy-one.
Page 26: Finn (Find mac Cumaill), the great chieftain of the epic literature of Ireland, said to have died in the year 274. He was the father of the bard Oisin.
Page 30: The Brawle; a lively French dance introduced into England in the sixteenth century. In a note to Marston's plays (1569) Halliwell says:

> "Goode fellowes must go learne to daunce,
> The brydeal is full near-a;
> There is a brawle come out of Fraunce,
> The fyrst ye harde this year-a."

And in Pepys Diary, Dec. 29, 1662, we read:

"The King takes out the Duchess of York, and the Duke the Duchess of Buckingham, the Duke of Monmouth my Lady Castlemaine, and other lords other ladies; and they danced the brantle."

Also, see Shakespeare's "Love's Labours Lost," Act III, scene I.

(4) Page 32: "Weenoch," Irish maoinac, treasure.

"Boucaileen bwee" (buacalin buide), yellow-haired little boy.

Page 32: "Mavourneen achree" (mo muirnin a-croide), darling of my heart.

Page 34: "Bearnas Mōr," a mountain in County Donegal.

(5) Eidolon,

Page 38: "Leannavan mo" (leanaban mo), my little child.

"Boucaileen ban" (buacalin ban), fair little boy.

Page 50: "Mo leannav' mo chree" (mo leanb mo croide), my little child of my heart.

Page 51: "Mo leannav' aroon" (mo leanb a-ruin), my beloved little child.

(6) Ricordanza,

Page 62: "Cruachan's fairy crest." A hill in County Roscommon, Connaught. It is sometimes called the Cave of Cruachan. The hill of the Shee. The "History of Burial-places," written about the end of the eleventh century, affirms that the Cave of Cruachan is the site of the underground royal palace of the Tuatha Dē Danānn. Afterwards it became the cemetery in which this primitive race buried its chieftains.

NOTES TO THE MUSIC

None of the old melodies used as preludes to these poems are given in their entirety. Possessing, as they do, the true Celtic flavor with their peculiar attraction in rhythm and melody, lingering in the heart and haunting the mind with such pleasant persistence, only snatches have been used by way of reminiscence, as it were; expressive of the old community of thought and the general mood of the present work.

All the other music herein unidentified is original; the work of the author, either as songs or piano accompaniments to the poems as readings.

Page 5, Nostalgia: Old Irish air known as the "Giolla Gruma." From the Petrie Collection.

Page 8, Aengus Gives Thanks: An ancient heroic lay said to have been sung by the bard Oisin to St. Patrick.

Page 12, Rune: Old Irish air, "My Dark Little Rose." (Roisin Dubh).

Page 19, Enchantment: Old Irish melody, "The Wicked Kerryman."

Page 22, The April Oriole: Old Irish song, "Nancy Vernon."

Page 39, Canticle: Old Irish air, "Farewell now, Miss Gordon." From the Petrie Collection.

Page 42, Nocturne: Old Gaelic love lament called "Chuir mo leannan cul ruim fhein."

Page 44, Quest: An old Celtic dirge known as "Cha tig Mor."

Page 49 Eidolon: An ancient Erris melody known as "Lost Light of my Eyes." From the Petrie Collection.

Page 54, Pavane & Galliard: Old Irish melody known as the "Moll Roone."

Page 59, Threnody: Old Irish song called "A Little Hour Before Day."

NOTES TO THE MUSIC

Page 61, Ricordanza: Old Irish melody known as "At the Brink of the White Rock." From the Petrie Collection.

Page 67, The Doom Song: Old Irish dance air called, "She hung her petticoat up to dry." From the Petrie Collection.

Page 71, The Doom Song: Old Irish air, "When she answered me her voice was low." From the Bunting Collection.

"Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us.
Such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing.
All these were honored in their generations, and were the glory of their times."

—Ecclesiasticus, Chap. XLIV; Verses, 1, 5, 7.

Three memorials of the Bards of the Island of Britain:

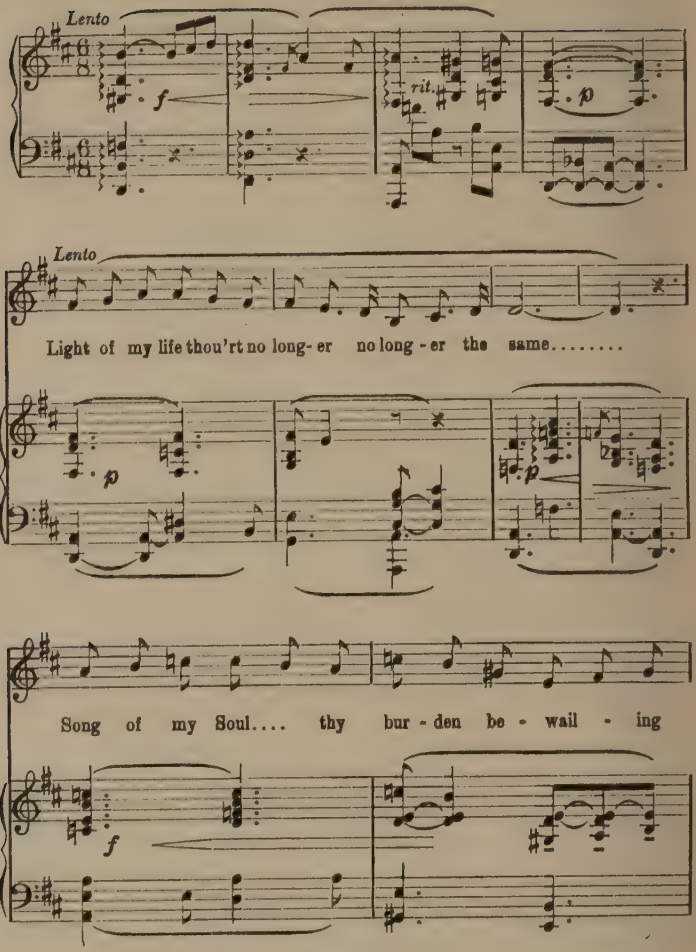
"Memorial of Tradition;
Memorial of Song; and
Memorial of Letters."

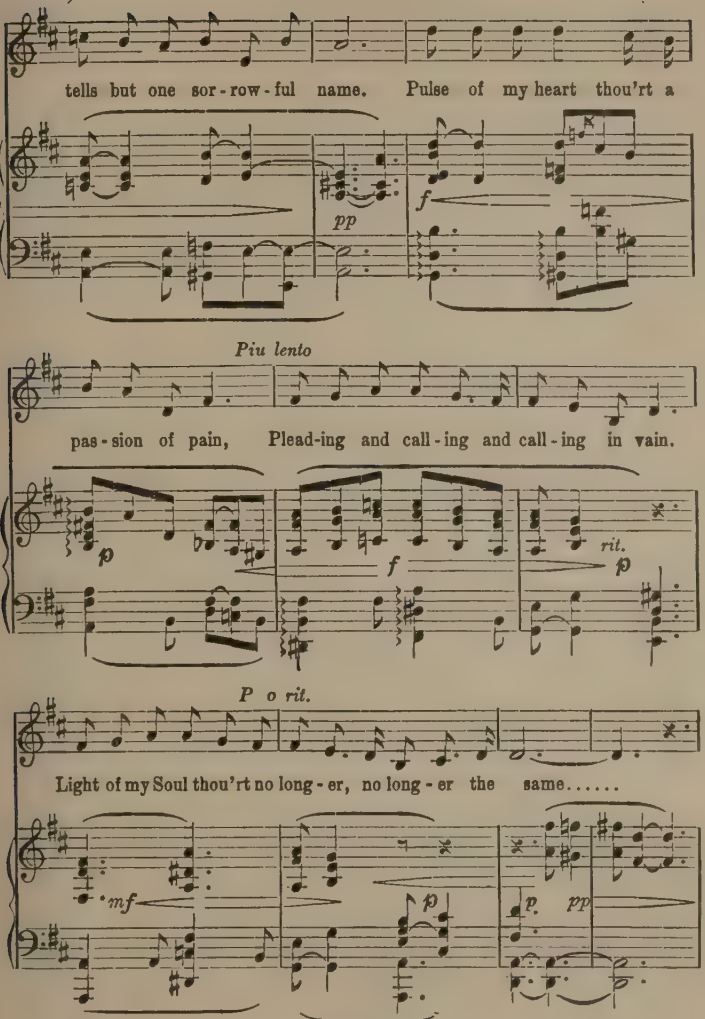
—Laws of King Howel.
(Circa 940 A. D.)

"Would I might have as wages,
For the work these pages given,
Freedom from critic's scorning
And morning peace in Heaven."

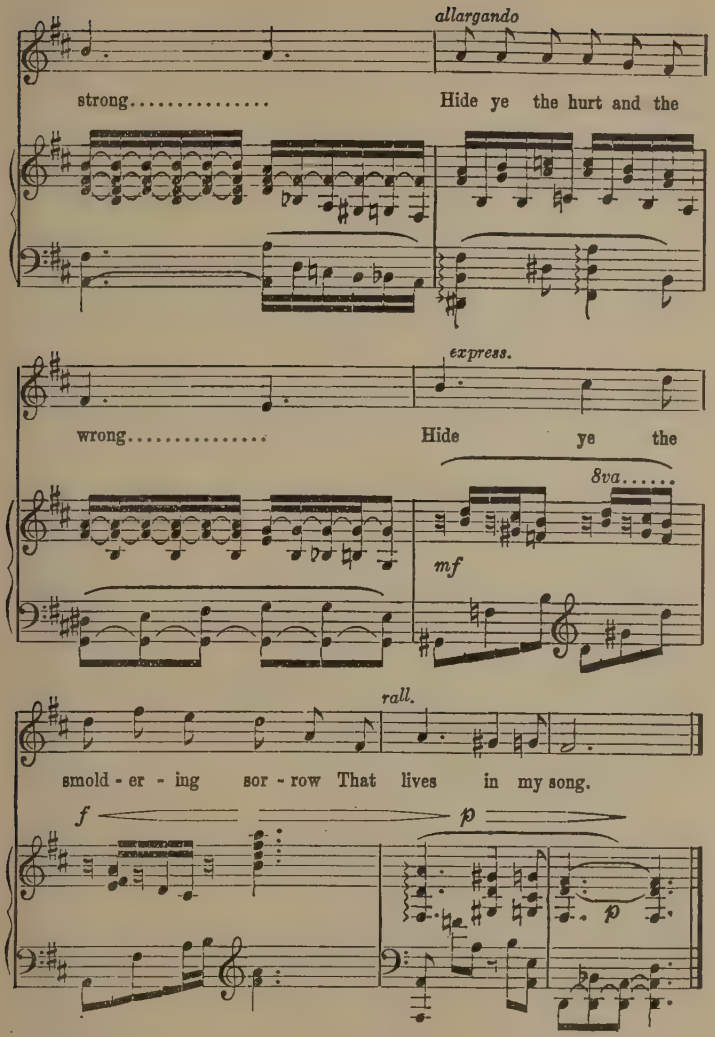
—Book of Dimna, A. D. 620.

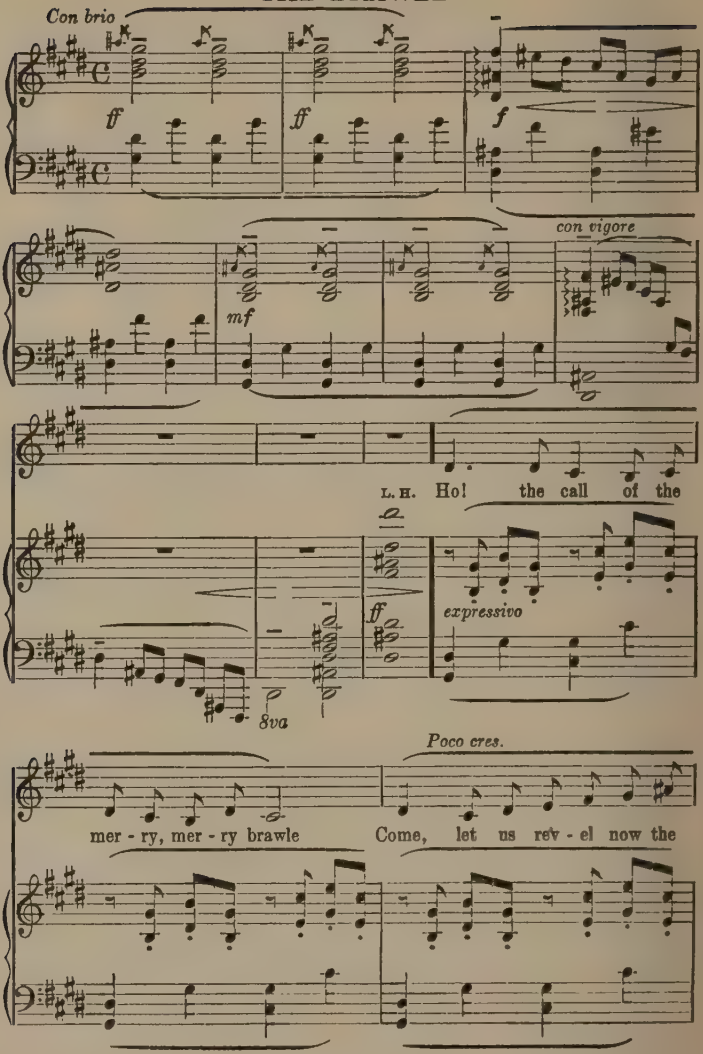
GLOOM SONG

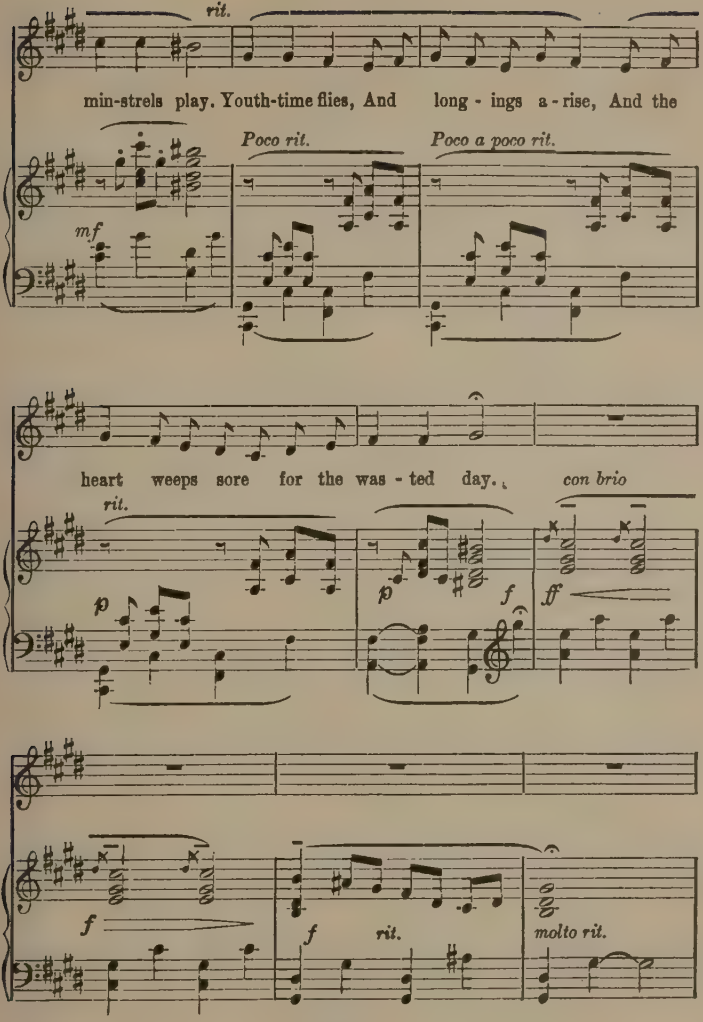

Lento
f
rit.
p
Lento
Light of my life thou'rt no long-er no long-er the same.....
p
p
Song of my Soul.... thy bur-den be-wail-ing
f

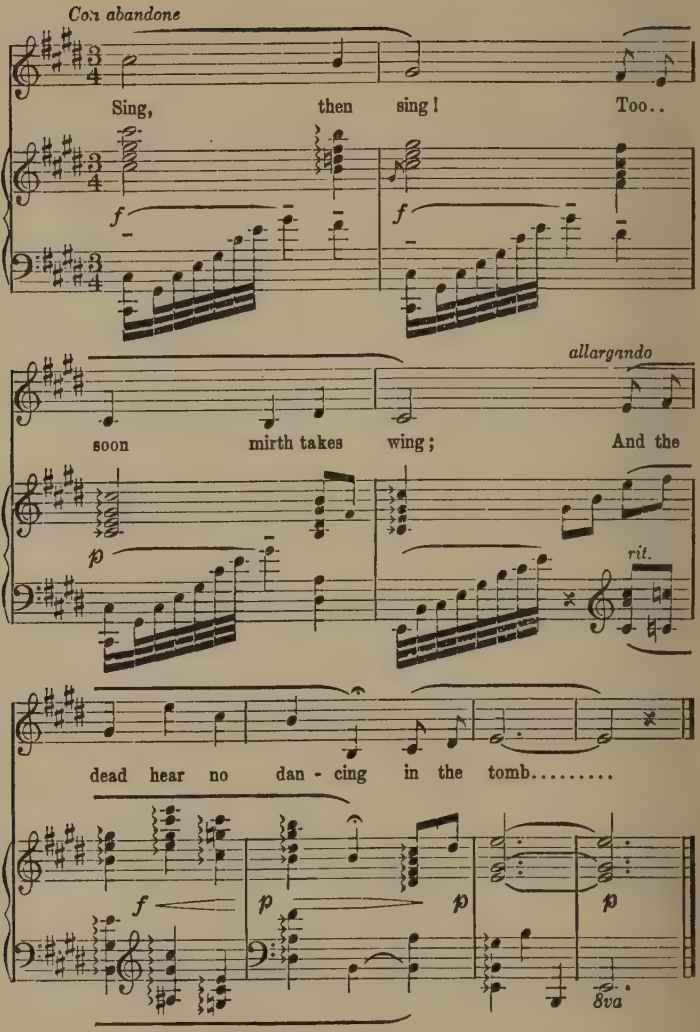

tells but one sor - row - ful name. Pulse of my heart thou'rt a
pp
f
Piu lento
pas - sion of pain, Plead-ing and call - ing and call - ing in vain.
p
f
rit.
p
P o rit.
Light of my Soul thou'rt no long - er, no long - er the same.....
mf
p
p
pp

a tempo
This is my song..... Mu - - sing a-
mf
p
Poco cres.
long..... Day - light and twi - - light and
8va....
rall.
a tempo
all night long. O heart, be
p
rit.
p
mf

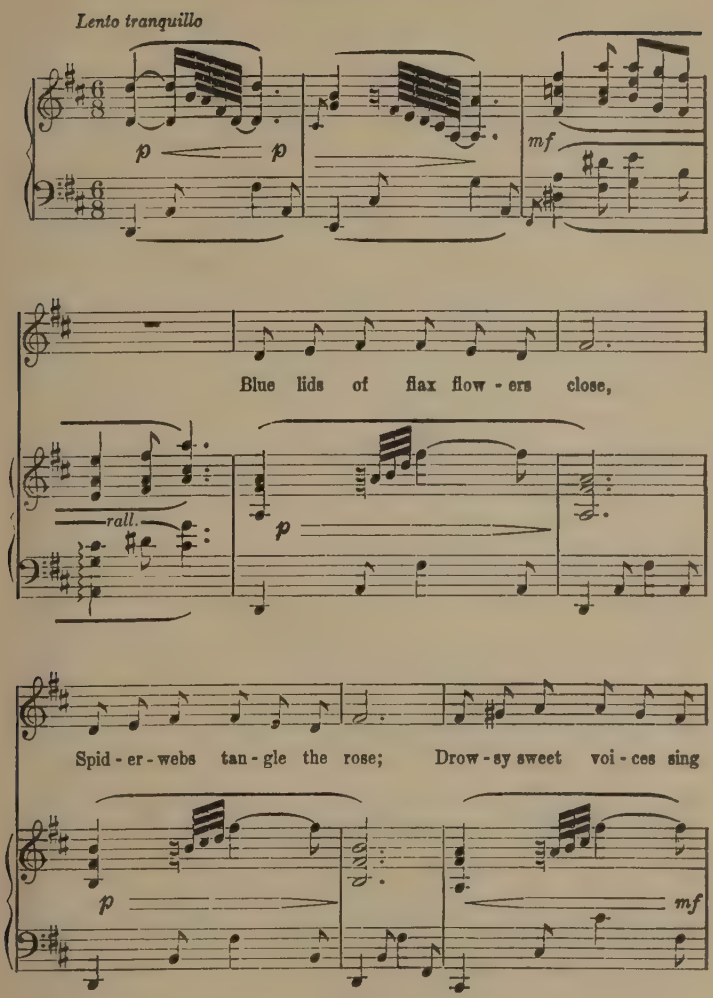

allargando
strong.....
Hide ye the hurt and the
express.
wrong.....
Hide ye the
8va.....
mf
rall.
smold - er - ing sor - row That lives in my song.
f
p
p

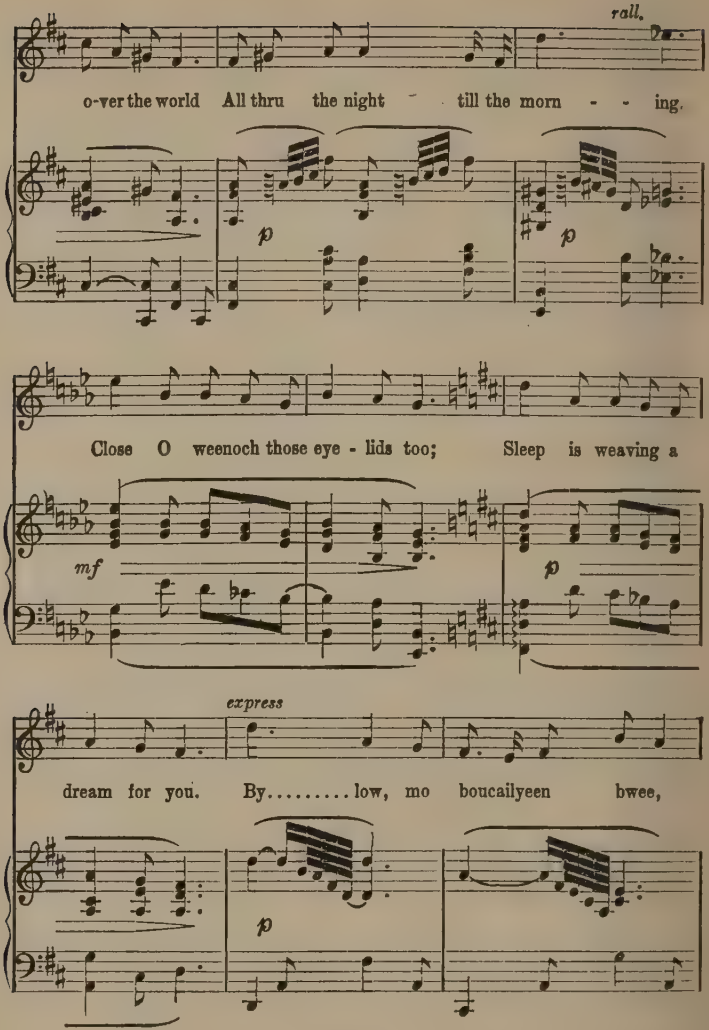

Con brio
ff
ff
f
con vigore
mf
L. H. Ho! the call of the
ff
expressivo
8va
Poco cres.
mer - ry, mer - ry brawle
Come, let us rev - el now the

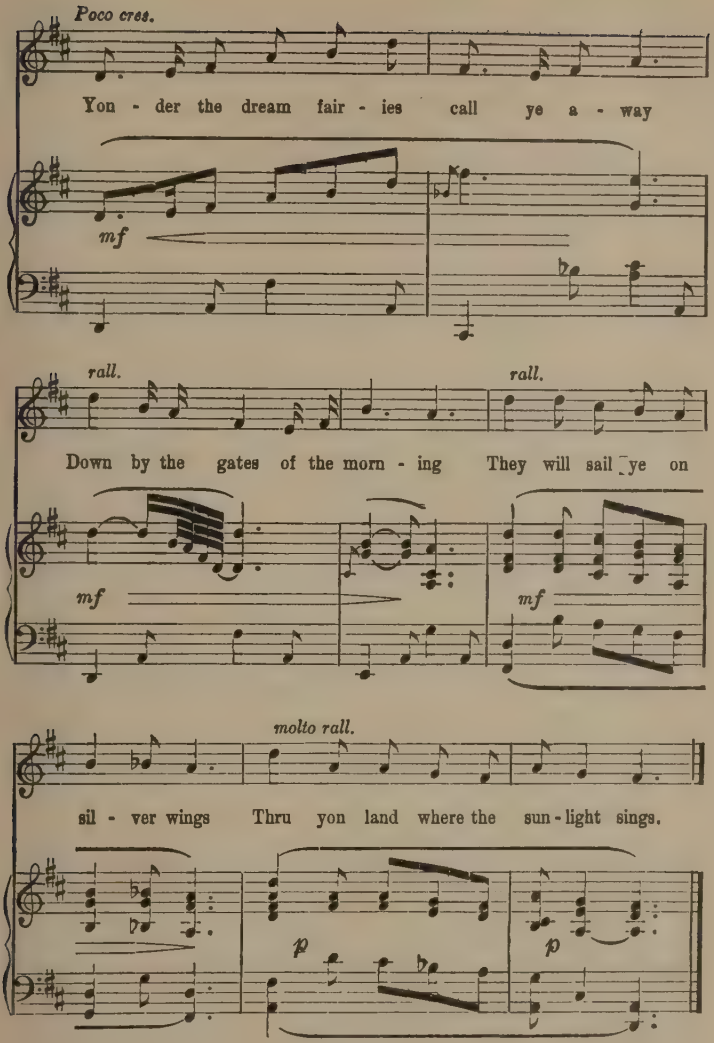

rit.
min-strels play. Youth-time flies, And long - ings a - rise, And the
Poco rit.
Poco a poco rit.
mf
heart weeps sore for the was - ted day.
con brio
rit.
p
p
f
ff
f
f
rit.
molto rit.


Con abandone
Sing, then sing! Too..
allargando
soon mirth takes wing; And the
rit.
dead hear no dan - cing in the tomb.....
8va

HUSHING SONG




rall.
o-ver the world All thru the night till the morn - - ing.
p
p
Close O weenoch those eye - lids too; Sleep is weaving a
mf
p
express
dream for you. By..... low, mo boucailyeen bwee,
p


Poco cres.
Yon - der the dream fair - ies call ye a - way
mf
rall.
rall.
Down by the gates of the morn - ing They will sail ye on
mf
mf
molto rall.
sil - ver wings Thru yon land where the sun - light sings.
p
p

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